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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-20
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P R 091000Z AUG 78
FM AMCONSUL STUTTGART
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4528
AMEMBASSY BONN
INFO USMISSION USBERLIN
AMCONSUL BREMEN
AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL MUNICH
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GE

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 STUTTGART 1512

USCINCEUR AND CINCUSAREUR FOR POLADS

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, GW
SUBJECT: FILBINGER'S RESIGNATION

REF: STUTTGART 1503

1. SUMMARY: FILBINGER'S RESIGNATION DOMINATES THE NEWS IN BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG. IN THE PRESS CONFERENCE IN WHICH HE ANNOUNCED HIS RESIGNATION, FILBINGER VOICED HIS CONTINUING CONVICTION THAT HE IS A VICTIM OF A "CHARACTER ASSASSINATION CAMPAIGN." WHILE WELCOMING THE RESIGNATION AS A NECESSARY STEP FOR THE WELFARE OF THE PARTY, CDU LEADERS GENERALLY AGREED WITH THE VIEW THAT FILBINGER WAS BROUGHT DOWN BY A CAMPAIGN WAGED AGAINST HIM BY POLITICAL OPPONENTS. FILBINGER'S CONTINUANCE AS CDU LAND CHAIRMAN AND
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FEDERAL DEPUTY CHAIRMAN IS WARMLY SUPPORTED BY LEADING CDU POLITICIANS BUT CRITICIZED BY THE OPPOSITION. WHO WILL SUCCEED FILBINGER IS NOT YET KNOWN BUT MOST PROMINENTLY MENTIONED NAMES ARE LOTHAR SPAETH AND MANFRED ROMMEL. SPAETH APPEARS TO HAVE THE INSIDE TRACK. END SUMMARY.

2. WHEN ANNOUNCING HIS DECISION TO RESIGN ON AUGUST 7 AT A 4:00

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P.M. PRESS CONFERENCE, MINISTER-PRESIDENT FILBINGER STATED THAT HIS RESIGNATION WAS THE "RESULT OF A CHARACTER ASSASSINATION CAMPAIGN" AND THAT HE HAD BEEN SERIOUSLY WRONGED. FILBINGER CONCEDED THAT HE MADE TACTICAL MISTAKES IN MAY OF THIS YEAR WHEN HE FILED A COURT SUIT IN AN ATTEMPT TO PROHIBIT AUTHOR ROLF HOCHHUT FROM CALLING HIM A "TERRIBLE LAWYER" AND STATING HE HAD PROSECUTED A GERMAN SAILOR BY APPLYING STANDARDS OF NAZI-LAWS EVEN AFTER WORLD WAR II. FILBINGER EMPHASIZED THAT IN FILING THE SUIT, HE PROCEEDED ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT POLITICIANS TOO HAVE A RIGHT TO THE "DIGNITY OF MAN" GUARANTEED BY ARTICLE 1 OF THE BASIC CONSTITUTIONAL LAW. "TO THE DIGNITY OF MAN," FILBINGER SAID, "BELONGS AN EFFECTIVE PROTECTION OF HONOR." HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE RESPECTED WITHOUT RESERVATIONS THE CONSTITUTION AND THEREFORE, OF COURSE, "PUBLIC FREEDOM OF OPINION." HOWEVER, HE WAS NOT WILLING TO TOLERATE DAMAGE TO HIS HONOR IN THE NAME OF FREEDOM OF OPINION. HE ASSERTED, "A FREE CONSTITUTIONAL STATE IN WHICH PERSONAL HONOR IS TRAMPLED UPON RUINS ITSELF." REFERRING TO CRITICISM THAT HE HAD NOT RECALLED THE DEATH SENTENCES OF 1943 AND 1945, FILBINGER SAID HE WAS ONLY A "HUMAN BEING SUBJECT TO ERRORS." FILBINGER FINALLY THANKED HIS PARTY FOR THEIR "SOLIDARITY AND FAIRNESS" SHOWN DURING THE PAST FEW WEEKS. HE EMPHASIZED THAT IN THE FUTURE, AS LAND CDU CHAIRMAN AND FEDERAL DEPUTY CHAIRMAN, HE WILL CONTINUE TO FIGHT FOR THOSE POLITICAL GOALS TO WHICH HE IS COMMITTED.

3. IN THE SAME PRESS CONFERENCE, ERWIN TEUFEL, CHAIRMAN OF THE CDU
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LANDTAG FACTION STATED THAT FILBINGER'S STEP "WHICH DESERVES OUR RESPECT" WAS THE BASIS FOR A "TRUSTFUL COOPERATION IN THE FUTURE." TEUFEL SAID, THE CDU FACTION "CONDEMNS" THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE MINISTER-PRESIDENT AND THAT THE PARTY WILL FIGHT WITH HIM AGAINST DEFAMATION OF HIS PERSON AND DEFAMATION OF A WHOLE GENERATION. DEPUTY LAND CHAIRMAN LOTHAR SPAETH DECLARED THAT THE LANDTAG FACTION AND THE LANDESVORSTAND (STATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE) AHD "UNANIMOUSLY" ASKED FILBINGER TO CONTINUE HIS WORK AS CHAIRMAN OF THE BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG CDU. "THE PARTY WILL," SPAETH SAID, "FIGHT WITH FILBINGER FOR THEIR MUTUAL GOALS." HE ALSO THANKED THE OUTGOING MINISTER-PRESIDENT FOR HIS WILLINGNESS NOT TO GIVE UP HIS PARTY CHAIRMANSHIP.

MANFRED WOERNER, SPEAKER OF THE BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG BUNDESTAG DEPUTIES TALKED OF A BITTER HOUR FOR BOTH THE CDU AND THE PEOPLE OF THIS LAND. WOERNER PROTESTED AGAINST DEFAMATION OF A WHOLE GENERATION OF "FRONT-LINE SOLDIERS."

4. ERHARD EPPLER, SPD LAND CHAIRMAN, EXPRESSED THE BELIEF THAT FILBINGER'S RESIGNATION GAINSAYS HIS CONTENTION THAT HE IS A VICTIM OF A CAMPAIGN BY HIS POLITICAL OPPONENTS. ON THE CONTRARY, FILBINGER WAS FORCED TO RESIGN BY HIS OWN PARTY. HIS DOOM WAS NOT

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DUE TO HIS PAST BUT TO HIS INABILITY TO COPE WITH THAT PAST OTHER THAN BY REPRESSION AND SELF-DEFENSE. THE LONGER FILBINGER REMAINS IN HIS PARTY CHAIRMANSHIP POSITIONS THE MORE DIFFICULT IT WILL BE FOR "ALL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES TO REMOVE THE PILE OF BROKEN PIECES ACCUMULATED OVER THE LAST THREE MONTHS," SAID EPPLER.

5. JERGEN MORLOK, FDP LAND CHAIRMAN AND FACTION LEADER REQUESTED THE PRESIDENT OF THE LANDTAG TO IMMEDIATELY CONVOKE A SPECIAL LANDTAG SESSION SINCE PEOPLE HAD A RIGHT TO KNOW HOW THE CDU IS GOING TO END ITS "CRISIS OF GOVERNMENT." MORLOK STATED THE CDU HAD AGAIN DEMONSTRATED ITS INABILITY TO ACT SINCE THE PARTY HAD PRESSED FILBINGER TO RESIGN BUT WAS UNABLE TO NOMINATE A SUCCESSOR.

6. THE BAVARIAN CSU MINISTER-PRESIDENT FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS
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DECLARED ON AUGUST 7 THAT FILBINGER HAD REALIZED TOO LATE THAT DISCUSSION ABOUT HIS ACTIVITY AS NAVAL JUDGE DURING THE WAR WAS A "SYSTEMATIC AND MERCILESS DEFAMATION CAMPAIGN FFROM THE LEFT." STRAUSS ALSO DEPLORED A LACK OF SOLIDARITY WITHIN THE CDU DURING THE LAST FEW WEEKS.

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CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GE

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7. FEDERAL CDU CHAIRMAN HELMUT KOHL, WITHOUT MENTIONING AN ALLEGED "CHARACTER ASSASSINATION CAMPAIGN," SAID HE RESPECTED FILBINGER'S DECISION AND HE AND THE PARTY ALSO APPRECIATE THAT FILBINGER WILL NOT GIVE UP HIS FUNCTION AS FEDERAL DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE CDU. KOHL IS REPORTED TO HAVE PRAISED FILBINGER'S "LASTING CONTRIBUTIONS TO BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG AND THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY." DURING THE PAST 12 YEARS BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG HAD BECOME A POLITICAL UNITY AND AN EXAMPLE OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL STABILITY. FILBINGER'S WORK WAS ANCHORED IN THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE PEOPLE, KOHL REPORTEDLY SAID.

8. WHEN FILBINGER'S SUCCESSOR WILL BE NOMINATED HAS NOT YET BEEN ANNOUNCED. WHILE OFFICIAL STATEMENTS ARE EXPECTED SHORTLY, IT WAS UNOFFICIALLY RUMORED THAT THE CDU LANDTAG FACTION WILL NOMINATE A UNCLASSIFIED

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CANDIDATE ON AUGUST 16 AND THAT HE WILL BE ELECTED AT THE FIRST LANDTAG SESSION AFTER THE SUMMER VACATION ON AUGUST 30.

9. THE MOST PROMISING CANDIDATES TO SUCCEED FILBINGER ARE PRESENT MINISTER OF INTERIOR, LOTHAR SPAETH AND STUTTGART MAYOR MANFRED ROMMEL. SPAETH, WHO BECAME CDU LANDTAG FACTION LEADER IN 1972, HAS NEVER MADE A SECRET OF HIS AMBITION TO SUCCEED FILBINGER SOONER OR LATER. BECAUSE OF THIS GOAL SPAETH REJECTED FILBINGER'S OFFER IN 1976 TO TAKE OVER A MINISTRY BUT REMAINED FACTION LEADER AND STRENGTHENED HIS POSITION WITHIN THE PARTY. AT A PARTY CONVENTION IN OCTOBER 1977, HE WAS ELECTED DEPUTY LAND CHAIRMAN AND A FEW MONTHS LATER HE BECAME MINISTER OF INTERIOR WHEN THE CABINET WAS RESHUFFLED DUE TO THE SUICIDES OF FOUR TERRORISTS IN THE STUTTGART-STAMMHEIM PRISON. SPAETH HAS ALSO GAINED A GREAT DEAL OF RESPECT FROM THE CDU RANK AND FILE BY HIS LEADERSHIP AND PARTY LOYALTY DURING THE FILBINGER ORDEAL. BECAUSE OF HIS WELL ESTABLISHED PARTY CREDENTIALS, SPAETH IS BELIEVED TO HAVE AN ADVANTAGE IN THE SELECTION PROCESS.

10. IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE STUTTGARTER NACHRICHTEN ON AUGUST 7, SHORTLY AFTER FILBINGER'S RESIGNATION, THE POPULAR ROMMEL CLEARLY ADMITTED FOR THE FIRST TIME THAT HE WOULD ACCEPT A CANDIDACY IF HE WERE NOMINATED BY THE CDU LANDTAG FACTION. ROMMEL, THE SON OF WORLD WAR II FIELD MARSHALL ERWIN ROMMEL, PREPARED THE 1966 GOVERNMENT DECLARATION FOR THEN NEWLY INSTALLED CHANCELLOR KURT GEORG KIESINGER. HOWEVER, HE DID NOT ACCEPT THE OFFER TO REMAIN IN THE CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE BUT RETURNED TO STUTTGART, WHERE HE BECAME CLOSE ADVISER OF MINISTER-PRESIDENT HANS FILBINGER

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IN THE STATE MINISTRY. IN 1970, HE WAS ELECTED MEMBER OF THE CDU LAND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. IN 1972 HE BECAME STATE SECRETARY AND IN 1974 HE WAS ELECTED LORD MAYOR OF STUTTGART. ROMMEL IS CLEARLY IN THE RUNNING AND ENJOYS THE STRONG SUPPORT OF THE CDU YOUTH GROUP, JUNGE UNION. HE IS ALSO VERY POPULAR WITH THE CDU BUNDESTAG
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DEPUTIES FROM BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG.

11. SPECULATION ABOUT A POSSIBLE "INTERIM-SOLUTION" (E.G., 61 YEAR OLD FINANCE MINISTER ROBERT GLEICHAUF TO BECOME MINISTER-PRESIDENT UNTIL THE LANDTAG ELECTIONS IN 1980) IS NOT TAKEN TOO SERIOUSLY SINCE IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THE MAJORITY OF CDU MEMBERS WOULD BE WILLING TO POSTPONE A DEFINITE DECISION FOR ANOTHER 2 YEARS. WHAT THE CDU MEMBERSHIP NOW LONGS FOR IS A STRONG MEW MINISTER-PRESIDENT CAPABLE OF REPAIRING THE DAMAGE TO THE PARTY AND ABLE TO LEAD THE CDU TO A 1980 REPEAT OF ITS SUCCESS IN THE 1976 LANDTAG ELECTIONS WHEN THE PARTY OBTAINED 57.6 PERCENT OF THE VOTES CAST.

12. COMMENT: HOW MUCH DAMAGE THE FILBINGER AFFAIR HAS DONE TO THE CDU IS STILL BEING ASSESSED. CLEARLY BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG'S NEW MINISTER-PRESIDENT WILL HAVE A FORMIDABLE TASK ON HIS HANDS. THE PARTY SEEMS SHORTSIGHTED IN ITS EAGERNESS TO ATTRIBUTE FILBINGER'S DECLINE TO A CHARACTER ASSASSINATION CAMPAIGN. IN RETAINING FILBINGER IN IMPORTANT PARTY POSITIONS, THE CDU HAS NOT MADE A COMPLETE BREAK WITH THE PAST. WHILE CDU OPPONENTS HAVE BEEN PREDICTABLY PARTISAN IN THEIR REACTIONS TO THE CDU'S "HALF MEASURE," MORE OBJECTIVE POLITICAL COMMENTATORS HAVE ALSO EXPRESSED MISGIVINGS. NEVERTHELESS, FILBINGER'S SUCCESSOR (ASSUMING EITHER SPAETH OR ROMMEL) WILL BE A MAN OF COMPARATIVELY LIBERAL PURSUASION AND MAY WELL BE ABLE TO REJUVENATE THE PARTY AND RESTORE POPULAR SUPPORT. IT PROMISES TO BE AN INTERESTING PERIOD IN BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG HISTORY.
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SAS ID: 1787384
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FILBINGER\'S RESIGNATION
TAGS: PINT, GE, CDU, (FILBINGER, HANS)
To: STATE BONN
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/62d2ea65-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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